DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 395 345 CS 509 255

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TITLE The Purpose and Challenge of Assessment: Organizing Assessment To Improve Student Learning and Maintain Faculty Ownership of the Process.
PUB DATE 19 Nov 95
NOTE 38p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Speech Communication Association (81st, San Antonio, TX, November 18-21, 1995).
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS College Faculty; College Outcomes Assessment; Definitions; *Educational Objectives; *Evaluation Criteria; Higher Education; *Speech Communication; *Student Needs
IDENTIFIERS Communication Competencies; *Evaluation Standards; *Faculty Attitudes; Nassau Community College NY

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses assessment in speech communication in terms of maintaining faculty control and the mandate of various accrediting bodies. The paper (1) explains the importance of assessment; (2) defines assessment; (3) explains the different levels of assessment; (4) identifies obstacles to assessment; and (5) identifies the challenge of assessment for speech communication. The first section explains why faculty within the communication department should initiate assessment; how assessment can promote the centrality of speech communication in general education; how assessment is mandated; and how assessment can help to improve programs and teaching. The second section considers how assessment appears from the various perspectives, including accrediting agencies, deans or administrators, the public, and the assessors themselves. The third section explains the importance of a pretest to evaluate students as they begin their major--the purpose of assessment is to demonstrate the effectiveness of a major. This section also discusses course assessment. The fourth section explains that many people do not know what assessment is; that some faculty are suspicious of assessment; and that others are just "inert," reluctant to take on the commitment. The fifth section examines the notion of communication competency and how assessment can assist in defining and validating it. Contains 28 references. Appendixes present various goals at Nassau Community College (New York) and worksheets for assessment. (TB)

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THE PURPOSE AND CHALLENGE OF ASSESSMENT: ORGANIZING ASSESSMENT TO IMPROVE STUDENT LEARNING AND MAINTAIN FACULTY OWNERSHIP OF THE PROCESS

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Paper Presented at the Speech Communication Association Annual Convention, San Antonio, Texas, November 19, 1995

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THE PURPOSE AND CHALLENGE OF ASSESSMENT

In 1985, the Association of American Colleges reported in Integrity in the College Classroom, that "The public . . . and the academic community are uneasy with the evidence of the decline and devaluation of the bachelor's degree . . . . to restore integrity to the bachelor's degree there must be a renewal of the faculty's corporate responsibility for the curriculum" (p. 38). Similarly, James W. Carey, dean of the College of Communications at the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana, observed growing public resentment because academe had " . . . tolerated practices that actively contribute to the ignorance of students and fail to meet the most decent expectations of the public" (1992, pp. 58-59)

Coming on the heels of such prior indictments of higher education as the National Commission on Excellence in Education's A Nation at Risk and the National Institute of Education's Involvement in Learning: Realizing the Potential of American Higher Education, there has been a flurry to assess in order to justify what we are doing and to provide a vehicle for renewal, that is, to provide a means of accountability and to enable academe to develop a program for continuous, ongoing improvement. Assessment seeks to answer the question of whether a college education is worth the expense and effort.[1] To answer this question, a series of other questions must also be answered: What is it we are teaching? Is this what we should be teaching? How do we know that our teaching has been successful, that students have learned? These questions require that we develop measurable criteria by which to judge success.

This paper will do the following: 1) explain the importance of

assessment, 2) define assessment, 3) explain the different levels of assessment, 4) identify obstacles to assessment, and 5) identify the challenge of assessment for speech communication.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ASSESSMENT?

The answer to the question, "Why should we exert the time and energy on assessment?" is simple and fourfold. First, if we do not, less sympathetic constituencies will do the assessment. Second, assessment can promote the centrality of speech communication in general education. Third, assessment is mandated. Finally, and most importantly, it can help us to improve our programs and teaching.

Why Internal Assessment is Best

Schilling and Schilling observed in the Chronicle of Higher Education in 1993 that, "By choosing not to respond, we allow non-educators to set the terms of the debate on the effectiveness of our work, people who will most likely turn to commercial testing agencies or other groups outside academe for answers" (p.40). This is precisely what occurred in 1985 in New Jersey when the College Outcomes Evaluation Project (COEP) was set up to assess the General Intellectual Skills (GIS) of critical thinking, problem-solving, reasoning, and writing in the State colleges and universities. The GIS was developed by the Educational Testing Service and there was continual conflict between it and college and university officials (Jemmott and Morante, 1993).

The imperative may be even greater for speech communication. Christ and Blanchard contend, "We believe communication educators are more likely to be required to justify their existence not only to outside

constituencies, but primarily within their own universities and colleges. If communication education programs are seen as fragmented, peripheral, or even nonessential, then we are more susceptible to being downsized and eliminated" (1994, p.31). This view was echoed by Wartella who stated, ". . . we're sometimes considered not central to the university's mission" (State of the Field, 1994, p. 1), and she asserted that a good deal of the problem lies with communication educators who have not done a good job of explaining what communication is and what we do to our colleagues.[2]

The Centrality of Speech Communication

We may believe that communication is central to life, but it is not always recognized as such. Witness the receivership of the Department of Communication at the University of Michigan, consolidation of the School of Journalism and the Department of Communication at the Ohio State University with an attendant reduction to 67% of their prior budgets, and the seige against the Department of Communication at the University of Arizona which is under a year's reprieve to justify itself (State of the Field, pp. 7-10). The State of the Field summarized the necessary survival strategies as 1) addressing the communication issues that most concern the public, (2) adapting to changes in the field of communication, 3) becoming more involved in the institution's core curricula with a focus on the undergraduate, 4) securing a place in the undergraduate general education requirements, 5) offering advanced level courses that are crictical for the larger institution, and 6) engaging in interdisciplinary activity which makes communication essential. Identifying what this entails and discovering means to achieve these objectives are the outcomes of well designed programs of assessment, that is, demonstrating compellingly that

speech communication is central to the mission of any institution of higher education that offers a liberal education to students.

Mandates to Assess

The aforementioned A Nation at Risk and Integrity in the College Curriculum led to a national conference on assessment in 1985 in Columbia, South Carolina, sponsored by the American Association for Higher Education and the National Institute for Education. In addition, the nation's governors set up the National Education Goals Panel in 1990, and the Goal 5 Work Group set as a goal "By the year 2000, every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship" (U.S. Department of Education, 1991, p. 9).

The six regional accrediting bodies also led the mandate to assess. The result of actions by the Council on Postsecondary Education (1987) and the United States Department of Education (1988) requiring accrediting bodies to obtain information about learning outcomes (Rosenbaum, 1994), the standards promulgated by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools were "the same as those later adopted by other accreditors: develop and articulate clear goals stated in terms of outcomes, select or build appropriate local measures to gather evidence of goal achievement, and provide evidence of the ways that the resulting evidence was used to inform improvement" (Ewell, 1993, p. 345).

In this way most colleges and universities have been led to a systematic institutional assessment program that continuously, rather than cyclically, examines effectiveness by comparing performance with goals and evaluating whether there has been implementation of recommended

improvements in the educational plan (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, 1992). Thus, at its core, assessment has four parts: 1) state the institutional purpose or mission, 2) define goals/results (state simply and tie to the mission), 3) describe the means of evaluation, and 4) describe the use of evaluation results. In this way, self-examination becomes a continuous process rather than a periodic event (Allison, 1994).

However, Rosenbaum states that of all the external factors, the states have been the major impetus to assessment (1994). Around 1987, states began to mandate assessment in public colleges, and by 1993, all but nine states had a policy on assessment (Ewell, 1993). At least 15 states employ student outcomes measures in determining budgets and allocations (Bernardin, 1990). In addition, three states, Florida, Kentucky, and South Carolina do require accountability data, and its use for this purpose is on the rise. "Data being sought . . . include graduation/retention rates, graduate placement, 'linkage' data such as transfer rates between 2- and 4-year colleges, instructional practices, and cognitive outcomes (Rosenbaum, 1994, p. 15).

By 1993, 97% of colleges and universities reported having or planning assessment programs (El-Khawas, 1993). Although only about one-third have serious initiatives (Rosenbaum, 1994), where assessment is undertaken with purpose, planning and resource allocation (budget and faculty lines) are tied to assessment. This is what is occuring at Nassau Community College, and it is the logical upshot of assessment. The following diagram clarifies this relationship:

ASSESSMENT PLANNING

RESOURCE ALLOCATION

Improvement of Programs and Teaching

There is an assumption underlying assessment that whatever is being done, no matter how well it is being done, can always be improved. There is also the belief that over time, needs and conditions change, and the only way to keep up with and adjust to the changes and to provide for renewal is for individuals and institutions constantly to examine and evaluate their goals and outcomes. On the basis of this research, they are then able to decide how best to continue to achieve their goals and meet future challenges.

DEFINITION OF ASSESSMENT

Assessment is a confusing term. There is no real agreement on whether it is the evaluation of student learning, or accountability for resources received, or proof of value-added, or program review or self-study. It can be all or a combination of these (Rosenbaum, 1994). It has been defined as "the process of defining, selecting, designing, collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and using information to increase students' learning and development" (Erwin, 1991, p. 15). Whatever perspective it takes, assessment essentially seeks to answer the questions: What are our goals? What behaviors demonstrate achievement of our goals, that is, what do students know or are they able to do? How do we know what produced this knowledge or ability? How can we improve what we are doing? In addition,

it is important to appreciate that the "we" can range from the institution to the department or program to the course to the individual professor teaching a particular lesson.

Once we identify what we are about, we then move into determining whether students are actually learning what it is we think we are teaching. To do this, we need to know the entry level of the student, the focus, breadth, and delivery of the curriculum, and the outcomes level the student achieves. We probably already have a great deal of data that the institution has always collected on high school GPA, SAT scores, basic skills level on entry, cumulative grade level while at the institution, comparisions of grades by departments, comparisions of grade distribution across sections of a course, and the like. This can all be useful, but it isn't the sum total of what assessment is all about. Assessment seeks to go much deeper. It seeks to answer such questions as, "Are we teaching students what they need to know? Are we teaching in ways that are effective for student learning? What can we do to improve our program and our teaching so as to assist student learning and to meet real student needs?"

There may be four audiences for assessment. One may be the funding source and/or accrediting agency; the second may be a dean or other body to which a department or program is answerable within the institution; the third may be the public at large; and the fourth may be the assessors themselves who use assessment as a diagnostic tool by which to evaluate their own activities within a course or program for the purpose of continuous improvement.

The general paradigm for assessment is the following:

1. What are our goals?
2. What behaviors or outcomes demonstrate that the goals have been achieved?
3. What measurements do we use to determine if the goals have been met?
4. What is our evaluation of
   a. How well we have met our goal, and
   b. How suitable the measurements we used were in terms of their ability to test the outcomes and behaviors we were seeking?
5. What recommendations would we make to modify or improve our goals and/or activities on the basis of what items one through four have told us?

The foregoing has been a general attempt to define assessment. This paper has also stated that assessment seeks to discover what an institution is doing and how well it is doing it and that the focus of assessment could range from the institution to the individual lesson. The meaning of assessment may be clarified if we look at the levels of assessment.

LEVELS OF ASSESSMENT

Institutions and Mission Statements

Assessment begins by asking the question, "Doing what?" Institutions have mission statements and goals and objectives by which they seek to operationalize their mission. At Nassau, our assessment project began with faculty reformulation of the College's mission statement and with the goals and objectives of general education and of career programs. (See Appendix A for typical goals statements.) We also designated a faculty committee to develop a general education entrance and exit examination. The reason for using an entrance examination or any pre-test is to demonstrate "value-added," that is, students are at a particular level when they enter an institution, program, or course, and, if there is a higher level at the exit, it can be argued that the cause of this difference is the

institution, program, or course. Because an in-house instrument is difficult and time-consuming to construct and validate, the committee decided to use the College Base Examination and the COMP Examination in the interim so that assessment could begin expeditiously. Moreover, Middle States suggests that the sequence for assessment be general education, followed by academic programs, and finally individual course offerings (MSA, 1990).

Department and/or Program Assessment

Galvin stated that "effective departmental assessment depends on the level of clarity and consensus reflected in a department's statement of mission and in its goals and objectives which operationalize the mission" (1992, p. 21). Objectives may be learning objectives, that is, cognitively oriented objectives such as subject matter and skills, and developmental objectives which may be cognitive and affective. Cognitive would include higher-order thinking skills such as critical thinking skills, while affective refers to "attitudinal, personal, and social dimensions nurtured through the college experience" (Erwin, 1991, p. 39).

We ask the questions, "What is it we teach? and "What is it we need to teach?" This is the phase of assessment in which the faculty of a department can analyze whether goals are realistic and up to date in terms of resources, student needs and abilities, developments in the field, and opportunities for graduates after graduation. For example, if a media program's major emphasis is on print journalism, especially newspapers, and there are fewer and fewer career opportunities in this area, is that emphasis a wise allocation of resources? It is also the point at which the faculty can identify how it can advance the institution's mission so as to

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position itself as central to that institution as well as to its own majors and to the general education goals. This is where the department or program has a clear opportunity for self-examination and renewal. Faculty can identify whether the curriculum does, indeed, fit the mission and goals of the institution, whether the outcomes are appropriate, whether the courses are appropriate to produce the outcomes, and whether the individual course goals and outcomes are appropriate and consistent across sections. It can also illuminate those areas in which a department lacks data to validate what it thinks it is accomplishing as well as point to what it needs to do to accumulate that data. For example, have we done graduate satisfaction surveys or transfer surveys or employer satisfaction surveys to dertemine whether we have prepared our students?

In short, at this point we are asking the following: What is/should be the mission of this department? How well does it fit in with the institution's mission? How well does it meet changing student needs and employer needs? How well does it reflect the status of the field? How well do we deliver the learning that is our goal? Do we need to make changes in our program? In sum, what does the the total experience of our program add up to? Does the curriculum delivered in our courses by various faculty coalesce in a meaningful way? Do our graduates possess the skills, attitudes, and abilities that we profess to foster? Are they able to function in some meaningful way in this discipline after they complete their degrees? How do we know this?

Such a review has led us at Nassau to investigate whether the Department should propose a required course for all students at the

College. At the present time, we have three majors in our Department, Communication Arts, Media Studies, and American Sign Language. Our basic course that we require of all majors is Oral Communication which is an interpersonal communication course and which varies in focus from skills to theory depending upon the instructor teaching it. We've been rather satisfied with our basic course because over seventy-seven percent of Nassau students take the course. As a result of assessment, we asked ourselves: Is communication so basic an ability in the late twentieth century that all students need this competency? If it is, should we seek a required course at the College? Research and employer polls seem to indicate that it is. (New York Times, 1995). We were also forced to ask other relevent questions: How does our "basic course" fit in with the College's mission? Is our "basic course" really the course that students need? How should this course be changed to ensure that it is the most useful course that meets student general education needs? Do we have consistency across all sections of our present basic course? How can we ensure consistency in our basic (and other multi-section) courses? Would the different major tracks be better served by different basic courses?

Additional questions that a department might ask at this point are: Do we have an updated mission statment congruent with the updated institutional mission statement? Do our catalog discriptions of courses reflect the department's and institution's mission? Are our course outlines congruent with the goals and objectives established for the department? Do we have evidence that department goals and objectives are being met? For example, how do we know that we are preparing majors to transfer to 4- year schools or that we are preparing students for careers?

Do we have evidence that the individual courses are meeting their goals?

With respect to faculty, we might ask the following: How has faculty expertise enhanced the department? Do we have the faculty we need to accomplish our goals? How many full-time and part-time faculty do we have and need to teach our courses, both courses required for the major and service courses? Have we clearly identified faculty qualifications for teaching specific courses? Are they congruent with faculty actually teaching those courses? Do we need to recruit new faculty or engage in faculty development? What has been our faculty's professional and scholarly activity?

With respect to students, we might ask the following questions: How attractive is our program to students? What kinds of students do the programs attract? How many students apply? How many enroll? How many complete the program? Have the above figures changed over the past five years? How? To what does the department attribute these changes, if any? What portion of our students need or needed remedial courses? What is their completion rate? How many ESL students does our department attract? How do they fare in terms of grades? What is the common drop out point(s)? Middle? End? What might contribute to this? What are average grades earned in required courses? In midway or generalized courses? What are average grades in two related courses in other departments? How do students fare in courses outside the department? What are the results of student opinion and satisfaction surveys? How successful are students based on data on GPA's at graduation, completion rates in programs over five years, retention/attrition rates, transfer rates, persistence rates at

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transfer institutions, licensure rates, job placement rates, employer satisfaction rates? Do we have the data we need to answer these questions?

With respect to the curriculum, we might ask the following questions: How effective and up-to-date is our department's curriculum? For instance, if we have a media program, do we have a course in media literacy? (Parenthetically, it might be noted that this might also be a course that could be tied to advancing the institution's mission in terms of a general education goal such as understanding the ethical, intellectual, and cultural bases of individual and social behavior. This is what State of the Field refers to in the advice to become involved in the institution's core curriculum.) In sum, we ask, what must a graduate of the department know and be able to do, and what attitudes must a graduate show if the student is to be successful in the real world beyond this program? Assessment questions also answer the question: How will students demonstrate success in these areas? Criteria answer the question: What constitutes a successful demonstration? (Allison, 1994).

With respect to resources and budget allocations, we might ask the following: What has been the impact of fiscal resources on the quality of the program? On program offerings? What has been the department's experience with budget requests vs. allotment over the past five years? What did the department ask for and get? Why do we think this was so? How many sections have we taught and what is the number of students in each section for the past five years? What has been our experience with seeking outside funding such as grants?

In short, the bottom line for this series of questions is: Why should the institution keep our department? What are our major strengths and

weaknesses? Are we doing what we claim to be doing? Depending on the answers to the above questions, we may then wish or need to make recommendations for change (improvement). It cannot be emphasized enough that although assessment can be used for justification and accountability, ideally, the purpose of accumulating this data is equally for the improvement of educational programs.

Allison (1994, p. 79) provides a program assessment model for Broadcast Journalism, which incorporates all of the above levels of assessment and a brief excerpt follows:

> Institutional Mission Statement: The university provides curricular programs in undergraduate education that prepare students for competency in career-related fields.
>
> Departmental Mission Statement: The Communication Department provides curricular programs to prepare speech communication and radio/television (R/TV) students with a high level of competency concerning knowledge and skill in career-related fields.
>
> Program Goal: To equip broadcast students with the knowledge and skills necessary for careers related to radio and television or entry into a graduate school.
>
> #1 Intended Outcome/Objective/Result: Graduating R/TV students will be able to demonstrate knowledge of the broadcast discipline.
>
> Assessment procedure and Administration: All graduating seniors will take a locally developed criterion-referenced test based on broadcasting courses taken at the university. An assessment committee of faculty will score the exam.
>
> Criteria for Success: Eighty percent of the students should score a grade of 80% or above.

Course Assessment

With respect to course assessment, we want to know what students should learn in a particular course, how well they are learning it, and how

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the department or institution knows this. At Nassau Community College we designed an instrument called the Guidelines and Formats for Individual Departments (GAFID) to assess outcomes of individual courses. (See Appendix B.) Spady defined outcomes as "a demonstration of learning that occurs at the end of a learning experience" (1992, p. 1). This means that there is a demonstration of observable knowledge, skills, or attitudes.

The Gafid is composed of the following parts: 1) a statment of goals and objectives, 2) a statement of expected outcomes (specific behaviors that mark the achievement of the goals. Nichols advises that there be no more than three to five statements of intended outcomes/results ([1991]), 3) measurements, (some form of evaluation that tells us whether we have produced the desired outcomes or behaviors), 4) evalautions of the results of the measuring procedures, that is, did our measuring procedure give us the information we need and what did it tell us about our effectiveness in achieving our goals? and 5) what recommendations would we make about our goals or teaching on the basis of what items one through four have told us?

We need to begin our process by looking at the course syllabus. Is the course syllabus geared to achieving departmental objectives? Istructors will also look at the catalog description in order to develop course objectives (or to discover whether the catalog descriptiion needs to be revised). Then the order and extent to which topics will be covered is determined. From this, the instructor can develop the course outline by dividing its contents into units. The next step would entail writing unit goals to support at least the course goals and identifying student competencies or performance objectives that satisfy those goals. At this

point, the instructor can develop lesson plans to achieve the performance objectives which are observable and, therefore, measurable (Tucker, 1994). A significant benefit of this is that instructors will have a clear blueprint of desired goals and expected competencies and, therefore, "should develop the ability to use educational assessments to solve instructional problems" (Tucker, 1994, p. 117). That is, if an instructor expects that 80% of students will understand A or that 70% will be able to do B and this doesn't occur, the instructor knows where to begin to examine the problem. The instructor can seek answers to the following: Was the material covered clearly? Slowly enough? Sufficiently? At a level appropriate to these students? Did the students grasp the material? If they did not, should I return to it, review it , present it differently, or drop it?

One of the things we may also look at here is how effctive is the delivery of our instruction? With this information we can then turn to ways to improve teaching and learning. What do we use to measure outcomes? The regional associations suggest using multiple measures, and they may include such measurements as student questionnaires, departmental examinations, pre-mid-post tests, nationally-normed tests, juried examinations, portfolio reviews, capstone courses, oral assessments, exit interviews, employer surveys, transfer school surveys, internships, public performances, numbers of students entering graduate school or getting employment in discipline-related fields, and exit and alumni surveys. (These instruments may also be useful at other levels of assessment.)

When we choose testing instruments, they may be norm referenced or criterion referenced. "A norm-referenced test compares one student against

another, whereas a criterion-referenced test compares students against some general standard" (Tucker, 1994, p. 118).

Again, we can turn to a series of qûestions: How does this course meet this department's mission? How does it deliver specific knowledge? Specifically, can students define a transactional model of communication? Can students translate, interpret, extrapolate based on their knowledge? For example, can students identify when someone is paraphrasing? Are they able to abstract from the information and apply to new situations? For example, can students identify whether in a particular situation, it would be appropriate to paraphrase? Can they analyze, that is, can they break down the elements of a situation and clarify the rankings and relations among the elements? For example, when observing a conflict situation, can they identify differing motives of the participants? Can they synthesize, that is, combine the elements into new patterns or structures? For example, can they develop a script that illustrates the principles of effective listening? Can they evaluate, that is, use a set of criteria or standards as a basis for making judgments about an issue? For example, can students develop criteria for how to deal with gender-biased communication?

We may also want to make "formative" assessments during the progress of courses. When we do this, we are amassing data to assess learning in order to make improvements. For example, the instructor may want to know, "Did I accomplish in this class what I set out to do?" The instructor may do this by assigning students to develop follow-up questions at the end of a class or exam, or through one minute papers in which students are asked to jot down what they did or did not understand during a lesson, at the end

of a class, or through exams and quizzes. (See Appendix C). For assistance in determining the assessment techniques most appropriate for particular teaching goals, instructors may wish to use Angleo and Cross's (1993) Teaching Goals Inventory (TGI), which has a self-scorable version and which is contained in Appendix D.

If the department or instructor evaluates students at the end of a course, or at the end of a program or major, then the assessment is summative (Tucker, 1994). Summative evaluations give a clear picture of what students learned after the class is over. Did students learn what was necessary for subsequent classes or after graduation? And of course, this goes back to program assessment questions such as, Why are we teaching this course? How does it fit into the institution's mission, the department's mission, the department's curriculum?

The following is adapted from Quianthy (1990) as a brief excerpt from a GAFID for a listening course:

Objective: Employ active listening techniques when appropriate.

Behaviors/Outcomes:

1. Identify the cognitive and affective dimensions of a message.
2. Demonstrate comprehension by formulating questions that clarify or qualify the speaker's content and affective intent.
3. Demonstrate comprehension by paraphrasing the speaker's message.

Measurements

1. Have students listen to a formal presentation and ask appropriate questions when the speaker is finished.
2. Have students engage in dialogue where the listener is required to paraphrase the speaker's point before responding. The speaker and listener will then exchange roles.
3. Have students listen to a videotape of a formal speech or informal conversation and identify the speaker's

purpose and the speaker's attitudes on the subject (pp. 31 and 67).

Continuing with the Gafid, we would add the following:

Results

1. 80% of the students were able to ask appropriate questions of a speaker after a presentation.
2. 70% of the students were able to paraphrase cognitive content, but only 55% were able to paraphrase affective content.
3. 85 % of students were able to identify a speaker's purposes and attitudes on a subject.
4. The measurements were appropriate because they measured actual student behaviors.

Recommendations

1. Spend more time practicing identification of affective intent of a message.
2. Spend more time practicing paraphrasing affective intent.

The following is another example of an excerpt from a completed Gafid:

Objective: Understand the nature of the listening process.

Behavior/Outcomes:

1. Differentiate listening from hearing.
2. Identify the physical and psychological factors that interfere with listening.
3. Identify negative listening behaviors such as pseudolistening, ambushing, and defensive listening.
4. Explain guides to good listening.
5. Distinguish among informational, empathic, and critical listening.

Measurements

1. Short answer quizzes.
2. Present a videotape stimulus and have students identify orally or in writing the listening problems portrayed and the means of dealing with these problems.
3. Present videotapes or transcripts of informational, empathic, and critical listening and have students identify the kind of listening involved.

Results

1. 90 % of students were able to score 80% or better on the short answer quizzes.

2. Only 60% of the students recognized the listening problems depicted on the videotape, and only 50% were able to suggest ways of improving the listening behaviors.
3. 75% of the students were able to distinguish among informational, empathic, and critical listening.

Recommendations

1. Spend more time in identifying the behaviors associated with problem listening.
2. Give students more class experience in identifying and responding to problem listening behaviors.
3. Give students more practice in desired listening behaviors.

The Basic Course

I will make the general observation that a department needs to clarify the function of the basic course. Is it a survey course? Is it a preparation for the rest of the department's curriculum? Is it a service course designed to meet general education requirements? Is it a required course at the institution? Is it designed to develop specific skills? Is it designed to attract majors to the department? Is it designed as a means of winnowing out the pool of students who want to major in the department?

Obstacles to Assessment

1. An immediate difficulty is that people often do not understand what assessment is, what it is meant to do, and how to go about doing it. For instance, we at Nassau think we have a handle on assessment. We developed our GAFID instrument, publicized it, had workshops for departmental assessment committees and chairs, and those of us on the Assessment Committee made ourselves available to mentor departments. However, when we recived the GAFIDs, we found all manner of non-specific information there. The behaviors/outcomes did not reflect the stated goal. The measurements were not always appropriate to test or discover whether

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the outcome had been achieved. For example, multiple-choice tests do not measure the ability to analyze very well. We found the measurements column filled in with such generalities as "teacher discretion" and "teacher devised instruments." The results column was the biggest mystery. Faculty did not seem to understand that the results column is supposed to tell you how well your measuring instrument worked. Finally, the recommendations ranged from, "We need smaller classes," to "test more often" which had nothing to do with the goals or behaviors or measurements or results identified in the previous four columns. In short, there was no logical progression from left to right to explain how the conclusion or recommendation was reached. The bottom line is that assessment is a fairly new process, and it is not well understood. We decided we have to go back to square one, and the mentors will have to hold departments hands and guide them through the assessment process.

Of course, this does not mean that even good GAFIDs will produce improvement in learning or in teaching. We could have perfect GAFIDs and still not have follow-up. Will departments or faculty actually act on the recommendations? This depends on why they are doing assessment. Do they see it as a mandate and vehicle of accountability or as a means of continuous improvement and refinement of program?

2. Faculty are suspicious of assessment. The bottom line for many faculty is that they see assessment as faculty evaluation, a measure of how well they teach the course. Not only is assessment an additional workload, but some "fear that unfavorable assessment results could bring punitive measures -- poor faculty evaluations and fewer salary increases and promotions" (Allison, 1994). For instance, my own department refuses to

examine the question of course consistency across sections for this very reason. However, this means that there is great variation in the content of our basic courses, and we have real problems of ascertaining whether we are accomplishing what we want to accomplish in those courses.

The belief is that if faculty genuinely own assessessment, that is, set the goals, develop the measuring instruments, and interpret the results, there will be more cooperation. Somehow, what needs to be conveyed is that assessment is a way to improve the academic program and an opportunity for a dialogue toward professional growth and excellence. (Allision, 1994). And this is difficult.

3. Faculty inertia is another obstacle to assessment. Assessment requires a lot of time and work. With large class loads, research requirements, and committee assignments, the huge investment of time and effort often seems unreasonable when faculty are fairly well satisfied that they are teaching what needs to be taught and that students are learning what they need to learn. It is precisely these assumptions that assessment challenges. However, without specific inducements, assessment is of low priority.

The Administration at Nassau has tried to make assessment of high priority by making future course and program approvals and budget allocations contingent on assessment. This is being introduced this year, and only time will tell whether it is sufficient inducement.

There is also a real tension when you discuss enforcement. At the present, Nassau's assessment is faculty owned. Nassau has a very strong history of faculty governance. However, what do you do about non-complying

departments? Faculty do not have the sanctions available to require compliance. Unless our recommendations are acted upon by other bodies such as a senate or planning body, we are stymied.

ASSESSMENT AND SPEECH COMMUNICATION

What we have said up to this point is that assessment cannot and should not be ignored. In addition, for those of us in speech communication, there are complex questions that are discipline specific. In addition to determining where we fit in the institution's mission and how well we are fulfilling our own mission, we need to answer such questions as: 1) what is our basic course? 2) Can we have a basic course? 3) Is there any consensus on what belongs in a "basic course?" 4) What is communication competence? The Speech Communication Association has undertaken an assessment project and has developed a list of essential sophomore level speaking and listening compentencies. 5) How valid is this list?

Since Larson, Backlund, Redmond, and Barbour wrote Assessing Functional Communication (1978), there has been debate about what constitutes communication competence, and a summary of this debate is contained in Quianthy's Communication is Life (1990). Quianthy concludes that a consensus does not exist about what constitutes communication competence. As a result of the lack of consensus, we as a discipline speak with conflicting and confusing voices.

Quianthy concludes that competence is a broader concept than effectiveness, performance, appropriateness, knowledge, skill, or motivation considered individually. He states that communication competence is based on a social perspective in which a communication interaction is observed by those within and outside of the interaction to

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make an assessment of the individual's handling of the social situation. Further, communication competence means that the individual is able to perform certain skills, not that the person actually will use those skills in a given situation. How much testing or assessment of actual behaviors do we do in interpersonal communication courses? Most of our "measuring" tends to rely on paper and pen tests. How accurate a measure are they of whether our teaching developed the skills we say are the outcomes we seek? Other kinds of testing, like grading in public speaking, are much more time-consuming and subjective. Is this kind of testing possible or desirable in interpersonal communication courses?

An issue this paper seeks to raise at this point is: The competencies that the Speech Communication Association identifies as necessary sophomore exit communication competencies (Communication Is Life, 1990) cluster in the public speaking and listening areas. Of twelve speaking skills identified, interpersonal communications only occur in section eight which has four parts. Of fourteen listening competencies identified, only one deals with interpersonal communication. If we we claim that the least we demand from communication competence is knowledge and skills, what is the knowledge and what are the skills that are most important for us to identify and which we should include in a basic course? Is there a consensus as to which competencies are "basic"? It may be argued that some from interpersonal communication, group communication, and/or argumentation and debate courses should be included (Engleberg and Wynn, 1994). Moreover, some departments reject the the SCA guidelines as "being too narrow to reflect the needed competencies of a university graduate in

communication" (Aitken and Neer, 1992, pp. 272-273).

SUMMARY

This paper has explained the importance of assessment in terms of maintaining faculty control of assessment and the mandates of various accrediting bodies. It has defined assessment as a vehicle of accountability and a source of program renewal through the process of identifying and measuring what it is an institution or department is doing, should be doing, and needs to do, and why this is especially relevant for the field of Speech Communication. It has identified various levals of assessment and the pertinent questions to be asked at each level. It has explained obstacles to assessment such as overt hostility as well as ignorance and inertia that exist even when there is not hostility. And, finally it offers some areas of challenge to the Speech Communication discipline.

The conclusion of all of this is that we are really in the infancy of assessment, and we have much work to do.

FOOTNOTES

1. Although institutional improvement, not accountability, is what is usually cited by state representatives as the purpose of assessment, ("State Trends," 1990), John Roueche, Provost at the University of Texas at Austin, noted in a speech to Nassau Community College faculty in April, 1992 that he used assessment results as a means of reporting to the state legislature so as to justify and argue for appropriations.

2. For a discussion of this issue, see also Cassandra Book, A provost asks where has communication studies been? Spectra, 26 (3), 5 and Stuart Seigman, Member responds to question asked by provost. Spectra, 26 (6), 3-4.

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NASSAU COMMUNITY COLLEGE

GOAL OF GENERAL EDUCATION

The goal of general education at Nassau Community College is to provide students with a broad-based learning foundation in the Arts and Sciences. This learning experience will enable students to do the following:

Understand the ethical, intellectual, and cultural bases of individual and social behavior.

Have the ability to conduct independent intellectual inquiry.

Recognize the value of lifelong learning.

Possess problem solving and decision making skills.

Communicate effectively to diverse audiences.

Have an understanding of science and mathematics adequate to make intelligent judgments about contemporary issues in science and technology.

Understand the methodology and application of the social sciences.

Have an understanding and appreciation of the arts and humanities.

Have an understanding and appreciation of the value of positive health behavior on the quality of life.

NASSAU COMMUNITY COLLEGE

GOAL OF CAREER EDUCATION

The goal of career education at Nassau Community College is to provide students with an ability to function in their chosen career field and, where appropriate, to prepare for successful transfer to a baccalaureate program in the career field. This career education will enable students to do the following:

- Meet the minimum qualifications demanded by employers in the field
- Pass any required licensing examinations
- Read applicable professional journals; apply what is read to the chosen career position
- Handle basic mathematical calculations and interpret and solve mathematical problems
- Be articulate in both speech and in writing (be able to present, question, propose and respond)
- Display familiarity with both the technology and the tools of the career field
- "See" themselves responsibly in relation to the career field - understand what is necessary in order both to perform optimally and to advance in the field
- Know the practice and courtesy of professional behavior demanded in the workplace
- Exhibit a developing set of values that will enable solutions to the ethical, legal and moral dilemmas faced within a career
- Recognize the importance of life-long learning

Goals 1. General goal statement 2. At least 3 to 5 specific goals	**Behaviors** Component skills & information that demonstrate progress toward the attainment of the course or departmental goals. (Must be measurable)	**Measuring Instruments** Instruments used to determine the extent to which the behaviors have been mastered.	**Evaluations/Standards** This area examines the results of the measurements and what they reveal.	**Recommendations/Action** These must respond to the results of the above measurements.

The "Muddiest" Point

What was the "muddiest" point in this session?

(In other words, what was <u>least</u> clear to you?)

_____

_____

_____

_____

The Minute Paper

Please answer each question in 1 or 2 sentences:

1) What was the most useful/meaningful thing you learned during this session?

_____

_____

_____

2) What question(s) remain uppermost in your mind as we end this session?

_____

_____

_____

Teaching Goals Inventory, Self-Scorable Version.

Purpose: The Teaching Goals Inventory (TGI) is a self-assessment of instructional goals. Its purpose is threefold: (1) to help college teachers become more aware of what they want to accomplish in individual courses; (2) to help faculty locate Classroom Assessment Techniques they can adapt and use to assess how well they are achieving their teaching and learning goals; and (3) to provide a starting point for discussions of teaching and learning goals among colleagues.

Directions: Please select ONE course you are currently teaching. Respond to each item on the inventory in relation to that particular course. (Your responses might be quite different if you were asked about your overall teaching and learning goals, for example, or the appropriate instructional goals for your discipline.)

Please print the title of the specific course you are focusing on:

_____

Please rate the importance of each of the fifty-two goals listed below to the specific course you have selected. Assess each goal's importance to what you deliberately aim to have your students accomplish, rather than the goal's general worthiness or overall importance to your institution's mission. There are no "right" or "wrong" answers; only personally more or less accurate ones.

For each goal, circle only one response on the 1-to-5 rating scale. You may want to read quickly through all fifty-two goals before rating their relative importance.

In relation to the course you are focusing on, indicate whether each goal you rate is:

(5)	Essential	a goal you always/nearly always try to achieve
(4)	Very important	a goal you often try to achieve
(3)	Important	a goal you sometimes try to achieve
(2)	Unimportant	a goal you rarely try to achieve
(1)	Not applicable	a goal you never try to achieve

Rate the importance of each goal to what you aim to have students accomplish in your course.	*Essential*	*Very Important*	*Important*	*Unimportant*	*Not Applicable*
1. Develop ability to apply principles and generalizations already learned to new problems and situations	5	4	3	2	1
2. Develop analytic skills	5	4	3	2	1
3. Develop problem-solving skills	5	4	3	2	1
4. Develop ability to draw reasonable inferences from observations	5	4	3	2	1
5. Develop ability to synthesize and integrate information and ideas	5	4	3	2	1
6. Develop ability to think holistically: to see the whole as well as the parts	5	4	3	2	1
7. Develop ability to think creatively	5	4	3	2	1
8. Develop ability to distinguish between fact and opinion	5	4	3	2	1
9. Improve skill at paying attention	5	4	3	2	1
10. Develop ability to concentrate	5	4	3	2	1
11. Improve memory skills	5	4	3	2	1
12. Improve listening skills	5	4	3	2	1
13. Improve speaking skills	5	4	3	2	1
14. Improve reading skills	5	4	3	2	1
15. Improve writing skills	5	4	3	2	1
16. Develop appropriate study skills, strategies, and habits	5	4	3	2	1
17. Improve mathematical skills	5	4	3	2	1
18. Learn terms and facts of this subject	5	4	3	2	1
19. Learn concepts and theories in this subject	5	4	3	2	1
20. Develop skill in using materials, tools, and/or technology central to this subject	5	4	3	2	1
21. Learn to understand perspectives and values of this subject	5	4	3	2	1

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1. In all, how many of the fifty-two goals did you rate as "Essential"?

_____

2. How many "Essential" goals did you have in each of the six clusters listed below?

Cluster Number and Name	*Goals Included in Cluster*	*Total Number of "Essential" Goals in Each Cluster*	*Clusters Ranked—from 1st to 6th—by Number of "Essential" Goals*
I Higher-Order Thinking Skills	1–8	_____	_____
II Basic Academic Success Skills	9–17	_____	_____
III Discipline-Specific Knowledge and Skills	18–25	_____	_____
IV Liberal Arts and Academic Values	26–35	_____	_____
V Work and Career Preparation	36–43	_____	_____
VI Personal Development	44–52	_____	_____

3. Compute your cluster scores (average item ratings by cluster) using the following worksheet.

A	*B*	*C*	*D*	*E*
Cluster Number and Name	*Goals Included*	*Sum of Ratings Given to Goals in That Cluster*	*Divide C by This Number*	*Your Cluster Scores*
I Higher-Order Thinking Skills	1–8	_____	8	_____
II Basic Academic Success Skills	9–17	_____	9	_____
III Discipline-Specific Knowledge and Skills	18–25	_____	8	_____
IV Liberal Arts and Academic Values	26–35	_____	10	_____
V Work and Career Preparation	36–43	_____	8	_____
VI Personal Development	44–52	_____	9	_____

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